

Governor's Office

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Governor and First Lady Joined by All State-Level Constitutional Officers in Announcing Policy on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Workplace

Frankfort. Declaring that a safety zone for women in the Commonwealth must extend to state government offices and agencies, Governor Patton today signed a "zero tolerance" policy against domestic violence and sexual assault in the public workplace. "While it is my goal to have a productive workplace in the Executive Branch of government, first and foremost we must ensure a safe workplace for all employees," Governor Patton said. "In this Commonwealth, domestic violence and sexual assault will not be tolerated, nor will we allow any individual to use state resources to perpetrate harassment of another employee," the Governor said in explaining his motivation for the policy.

The First Lady, who recommended the policy to Governor Patton, shared data showing that 30% of women who die in the workplace lose their lives to homicide. "Our effort is to prevent any more loss of life and to communicate to victims that if they find themselves in harms way, this Commonwealth will take steps to support them," Mrs. Patton said.

The Governor and First Lady were joined in making today's announcement by Attorney General Ben Chandler, Secretary of State John Y. Brown III, Treasurer Jonathan Miller, Auditor Ed Hatchett and Agriculture Commissioner Billy Ray Smith. In acknowledging their participation, Governor Patton said, "it is indicative of the importance of this initiative that I am joined in affixing my signature to this policy by every state-level Constitutional Officer in the Commonwealth." As Governor Patton signed the Executive Order implementing the "Zero Tolerance Policy for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Workplace", each Constitutional Officer concurrently signed an Administrative Order implementing the program in his respective office.

As he signed his Administrative Order, Secretary of State John Y. Brown III said, "This Order serves the twin goals of raising awareness of the problems of domestic violence and sexual assault and promoting a policy of zero tolerance against such behavior, both inside and outside the workplace." Secretary Brown joined Mrs. Patton as Co-Chair of the Governor's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in June of this year.

Attorney General Ben Chandler said, "People have a right to work in an environment free of violence and intimidation. I fully support this Executive Order which will help ensure that we have such an environment in Kentucky state government.

"I am pleased to add my strong support for Governor Patton's efforts to eradicate acts of domestic violence and sexual assault from the work place. The program he has outlined is an important step in ensuring that no one has to work in a harassing or intimidating environment," Treasurer Jonathan Miller said when signing his Administrative Order.

State Auditor Ed Hatchett noted: "State government must be a model for all workplaces in our Commonwealth, so I join our Governor and First Lady in committing myself and the resources of my office to assuring our employees freedom from domestic violence and sexual assault."

"Domestic violence and sexual assault are harmful to people and families," Agriculture Commissioner Billy Ray Smith said. "The Department of Agriculture is squarely behind the state's effort to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault in the state workforce."

The "Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Public Workplace Policy" has three key components:

- 1) Zero Tolerance for All Acts of Violence;
- 2) Creating a Sensitive and Safe Environment for Victims;
- 3) Increased Education for All Employees.

The policy will be implemented by training, the publication of the policy with accompanying guidelines for employers and employees, and through posting of information on agency and office web sites, bulletin boards and other locations.